

## THE LATE MEDIEVAL PORT BUILDINGS OF ARDGLASS, COUNTY DOWN, IN THE CONTEXT OF NORTHERN EUROPEAN TRADE

MARK GARDINER

*mgardiner@lincoln.ac.uk*

*A number of the ruined, late medieval buildings at Ardglass, Co Down, are discussed to consider the way in which commerce took place. It is argued that one building provided both lodgings and shops on the ground floor from where the merchants' goods might be sold, and another served as a dining room for the visiting traders. The pattern of lodgings and shops can be compared to the booths occupied by merchants elsewhere in the North Atlantic operating a form of trade distinctive of that region.*

### INTRODUCTION

When archaeologists talk of trade and of imports, the discussion is generally about artefacts, and particularly pottery. Little consideration is given to the practicalities of the movement of goods and the mechanisms of exchange. An alternative approach is to regard trade as the outcome of the operation of impersonal macro-economic forces. Yet, at the point of exchange, trade was a matter of negotiation and depended upon the establishment of trust

between individuals. The details of the processes of trade and the places in which it occurred deserve rather more attention from archaeologists than they have received. This paper is an attempt to address some of these issues through a consideration of places in which commerce took place. By thinking through the business of exchange, we can begin to understand how artefacts may have reached consumers.

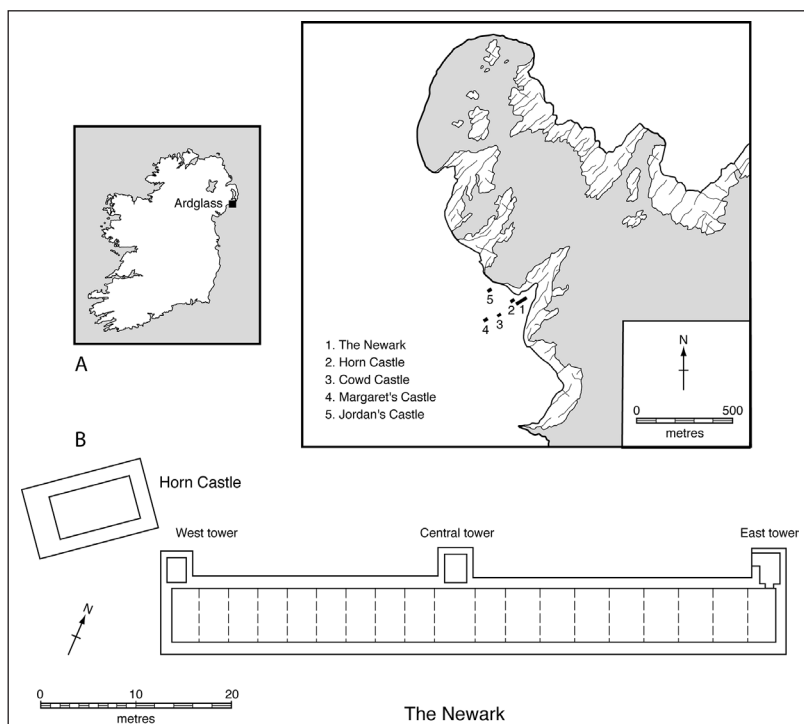


Fig 1 A: Plan of Ardglass showing the standing medieval buildings; B: schematic plan of the Newark and Horn Castle as built (after McNeill 2005).

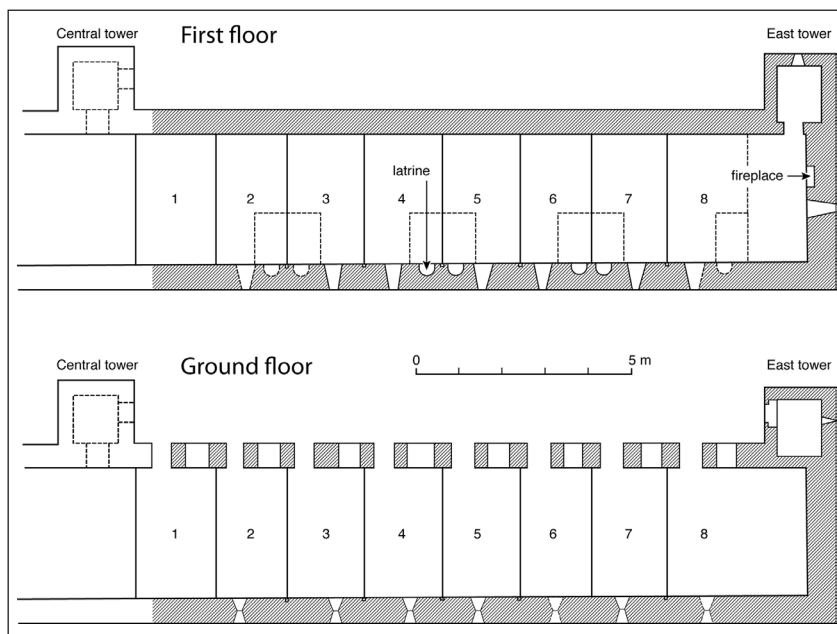


Fig 2 Reconstruction of the east end of the Newark (adapted from McNeill 2005).

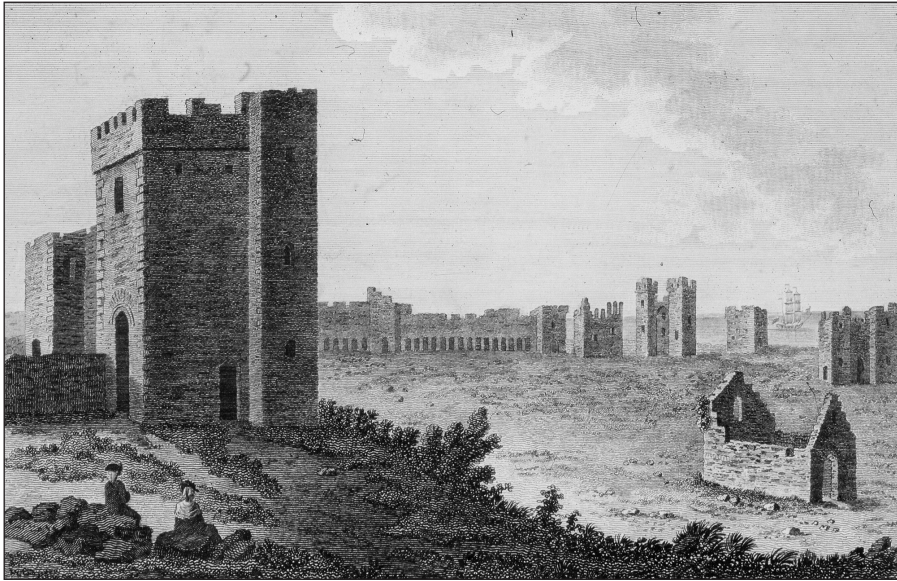
## ARDGLASS BUILDINGS

Ardglass today is a minor port in the south of Lecale, Co Down, used both by commercial fishing vessels and yachts. Its archaeological interest derives from the remarkable survival of at least five standing late medieval buildings from which it is possible to reconstruct something of the character of the town (Fig 1). The potential of the former port to answer some of the questions about the character of late medieval trade led to a research programme between 1998 and 2000 undertaken by Dr Tom McNeill and myself. Survey or excavation was undertaken on four of those buildings. Chris Lynn visited the excavations at Ardglass in their final year and gave some thought to how we might present to the public the complex story we were uncovering. However, at that stage the full implications of those discoveries were not apparent, and it has only been possible subsequently to draw out the significance of what we found. Although some of the results have already been published (McNeill 2005), the present paper offers a reconsideration of a few of the buildings in the town and the character of trade.

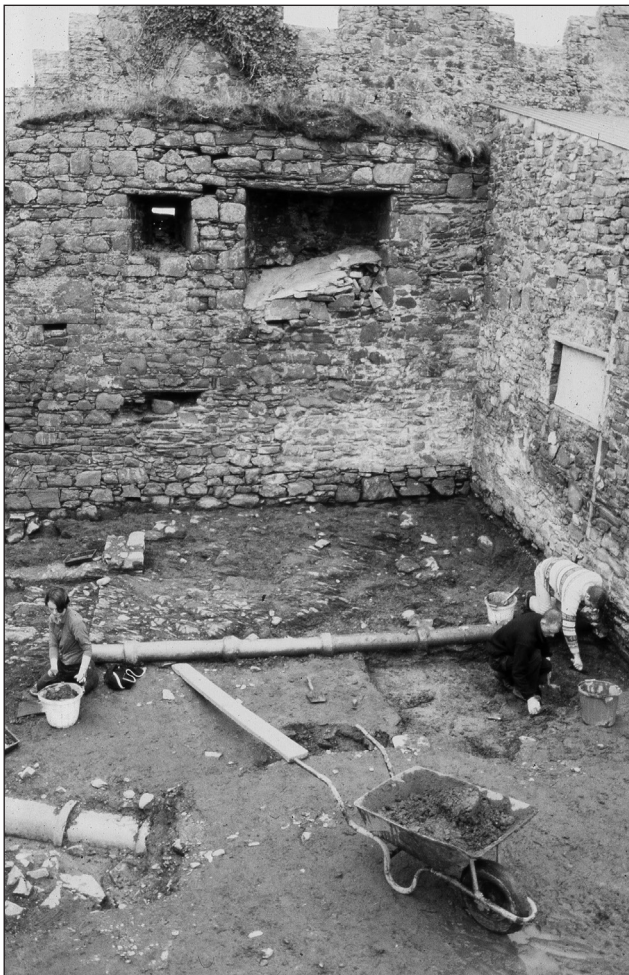
The largest and most striking of the standing medieval buildings in Ardglass is the structure which was known in the 18th century as the Newark. This must be the same building described in an inquisition of 1427 as 'a messuage called the Newark in Ardglass' which was held by Janico Dartasso at his death (Tresham 1828, 242). There seems no reason to doubt that the present ruins belong to the end of the 14th or early part of the 15th century. The building was recorded by various

artists and antiquaries in the 18th century. In about 1790 the ruins were incorporated into a neo-Gothic house built by Lord Charles Fitzgerald (Jope 1966, 220). This building now serves in part as the clubhouse of Ardglass Golf Club and the remainder is incorporated into outbuildings. The written and drawn evidence has been fully reviewed by McNeill (2005, 2–13). He also made a thorough study of the standing building so that it is necessary here only to summarize his conclusions. The building comprised a remarkably long range extending for 65.5m, and flanked by two three-storey towers. A third tower lies almost at the centre of the range. The body of the building between the towers was divided into separate units, each of which had an individual door and window. There were probably eight such units in the east wing and seven in the west. Each unit at ground-floor level had a square-headed window about 1m wide without mullion and a door with a two-centred arch. At the rear of each room there was a double-splayed loop (Fig 2). Antiquarian drawings suggest that there were no openings on the north (front) face of the building at first-floor level (Grose 1791, 2, pl 13; see Pl 1). Examination of the fabric shows that there was a single-splayed loop for each unit in the rear face. Joist-holes can be identified in the surviving fabric and these seem to coincide with the position of timber partitions which separated the units (Pl 2).

The authors of the *Archaeological Survey of County Down* presumed that the niches in the rear of the first-floor rooms were latrines (Jope 1966, 221). When we looked at the building in 1998, both



Pl 1 Grose's view of Ardglass in the late 18th century. The Newark is shown in the centre of the background. Jordan's Castle is the second building to the right of the Newark (after Grose 1791).



Pl 2 A view of the interior of the rear wall of the Newark during excavation by T E McNeill. Traces of a partially filled joist-hole are apparent on the left. Next to it are two windows, one on the ground and one on the first floor. The largest opening, partially infilled, is for two adjoining latrines which would have been separated by a wooden partition. The wall on the right is modern.



Tom McNeill and I were unpersuaded. Observing that they had no apparent chutes, we concluded that they were cupboards (McNeill 2005, 10). However, a mid-18th-century description, of which we were then unaware, also identified them as latrines:

the flue of which runs down through the wall and was washed at bottom by the sea; some of the flagged seats remain perfect (Vallancey 1786, 680).

This is quite specific, though it is very doubtful that the base of the wall was ever exposed to the sea. Furthermore, that account is supported by the independent observation by Richard Pococke who toured Ireland in 1752:

What is remarkable from the upper rooms there is a communication something like what they call the murdering holes, but going quite down to the ground so as not to be observed from the outside, which might serve as shoars to the upper apartm[en]ts and it may be for other purposes (Stokes 1891, 11).

The term 'shoar', more commonly spelled 'shore', was used in the 18th and 19th century as a variant for 'sewers'. The written evidence thus supports the identification of these niches as latrines, even though no exits for the garderobe chutes can now be seen in the south wall of the building, nor evidently could be in the mid-18th century. Presumably, the outlets for the latrine shafts are now below ground level.

The flanking tower at the east end of the building is not covered in render and is easier to understand than that at the west. It comprised a vaulted ground floor without access to the first floor. The first-floor room in the tower is entered through an adjoining room which was equipped with a fireplace, which is notably lacking in the other units. The central tower of the range is incorporated into the golf clubhouse and covered externally in render and internally in plaster, so no details are apparent. The accommodation provided in the Newark can thus be summarized as fifteen individual two-storey units, of which only those at the two ends had fireplaces. Latrines were provided for each room. By any standards this was a remarkable building, not merely for its extraordinary scale, but also for its plan.

It is hardly surprising that in the 18th century a large medieval building, such as the Newark, attracted the attention of visiting antiquaries. More remarkable is that they seemed to have been unusually well informed about its function. From Harris in the 1740s onwards, the building was

identified as a row of traders' shops (Harris 1744, 22). One writer, who ascertained that the building was called the New Works, even speculated that a London trading company was established at Ardglass at an early period and that the building was its 'bazaar' (Vallancey 1786, 682). The idea that this was a building associated with trade and that the rooms were the shops of the merchants can hardly have been apparent from the ruined structure itself. Antiquaries must have gathered this information by questioning local people from whom they were also able to establish its name. Evidently, a tradition persisted in Ardglass about the building, something which has been noted in connection with trading sites elsewhere in the North Atlantic (Gardiner 2012, 16–20). This survival of memory is particular important when we consider the purpose of Horn Castle.

Horn Castle stands immediately to the west of the Newark and slightly forward of it (Fig 1). It is unfortunate that so little can be said about this building from an archaeological point of view; the masonry is covered externally in harling which has hidden all features and, equally, it is covered internally in plaster. It too may be a 15th-century building, though the evidence is unclear. Horn Castle is shown as a two-storey structure in a sketch of Ardglass made in 1745 by Mary Delany (Day 1991, 219). It is similarly depicted in the frontispiece to Burdy's poems on Ardglass, but with four windows on its northern face on each floor. The latter illustration may have been drawn after it had been restored by Lord Lecale to form a kitchen and rooms for servants (Burdy 1802, xxiv). For this building too, we have an invaluable description from an 18th-century antiquary:

It consists of two stories, and from the fireplaces and other marks, appears to have been the kitchen and dining-hall belonging to the merchants. It is called the Horn-Castle, from quantities of ox, deer, and goats horns being found about it; which plainly discovers its former use (Vallancey 1786, 680–81).

That interpretation of the building is repeated in the Ordnance Survey memoirs, which noted that it 'is supposed to have been used by merchants as a messing hall and kitchen' (Day & McWilliams 1992, 12). As McNeill (2005, 14) noted, it is such an extraordinary and specific statement that it is hardly likely to have been made up. Instead, we may assume that it too derives from an oral tradition.

A third Ardglass building, which needs brief discussion, is set slightly apart from the others. It is a structure uncovered in the excavations undertaken

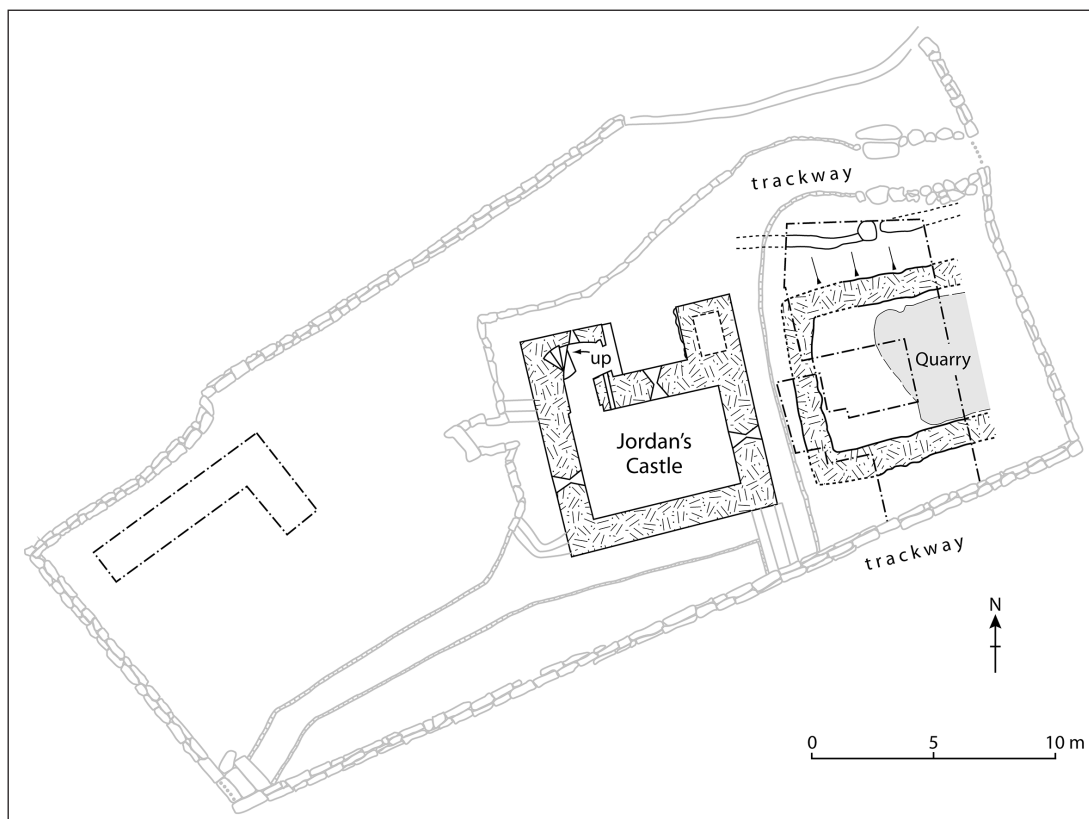


Fig 3 Plan of Jordan's Castle tower-house and the excavated remains of the adjoining warehouse to the east. Modern features are shown in grey. Medieval features and excavation trenches shown in black.

adjacent to Jordan's Castle between 1998 and 2000 (Figs 1, 3; Pl 1). Jordan's Castle is an impressive tower house of Lecale type. The substantial stone-walled building was located on the seaward side of the tower house, and was virtually the same width and built parallel with it. It was a singular building with an internal floor surface which was sloping downhill. Excavations below this floor revealed a deep pit loosely filled with quarry waste and fragments of mortar. It had evidently been used for quarrying stone for the building and remained open while construction was taking place. The uphill wall adjoining the tower house had a thick layer of clay at ground level to ensure that water did not penetrate the building. These features suggested that a primary aim of the builders was to keep the interior dry and to drain any water which did seep in, either over the floor or into the pit which served as a sump. The slope of the floor made the building unsuitable for habitation. These factors, together with the position of the building, suggest that the

excavated structure was a warehouse for storing goods, presumably belonging to the merchant in the adjoining tower house.

The full dimensions of the warehouse were not recovered. The building could only be broadly dated to a period before the mid- to late 16th century from a coin. That coin was found in debris from a further building to the south which had collapsed and fallen against the warehouse wall. The building rubble overlay a road which ran down the slope beside the warehouse and Jordan's Castle. There was a further road on the north side of those two buildings which gave access to the door of the tower house. This part of Ardglass appears to have been divided into narrow holdings separated by passageways which stretched down the slope to the waterfront, a pattern found in many medieval ports. The coin, therefore, provides a date when this area of town was falling into a state of ruin. A 15th-century date for the warehouse seems plausible.

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF COMMERCE

Foreign trade in the middle ages is often envisaged as large-scale movements of goods from one major port to another. The trading pattern across the English Channel, North Sea and to some degree in the Irish Sea certainly did involve commerce in large quantities of produce which was traded between merchants. However, even a brief glance at the customs accounts, a source which is fundamental for an understanding of trade, reveals that a ship's cargo rarely comprised the goods of a single merchant. Trading vessels were often chartered by consortia of merchants who formed partnerships to hire a vessel and who between them would provide a cargo for shipping. Our knowledge of such charter parties is based largely on legal cases which arose when the arrangements did not work out, but presumably most such charters ended successfully (Kermode 1998, 226–28). Alternatively, merchants might place their goods upon a ship which was already making a crossing. Merchants commonly divided their cargoes between a number of ships to spread the risk should one founder or be taken by pirates. In addition to merchants' goods, a ship might also carry smaller quantities being traded by the crew. These were known as portages and were agreed with the ship-owner and allowed the payment of reduced wages (Burwash 1947, 43, 47; Kowaleski 2011, 174–75; Carus-Wilson 1937, no 120 provides an example). As a result, any trading vessel was likely to be carrying the goods belonging to a number of different merchants, as the recently published customs accounts for trade between Bristol and Ireland demonstrate. The *Lenard* of Waterford, for example, reached Bristol in October 1503 with cargoes belonging to seventeen merchants (Flavin & Jones 2009, 3–4).

The goods were discharged on arrival at the destination and, in due course, the ship was reladed with a cargo for the return journey. A period of up to thirty working days was allowed for this, during which time the ship would remain in the harbour (Hanham 1998, 377; cf James 1971, 134). In the meantime, the captain and crew often found lodgings ashore (Keene 1999, 410–13; Kowaleski 2007, 113). Unless it was the home port, the shipped goods were sold by a factor who might be a son of a merchant learning the trade, a trusted servant or associate, or simply an agent who acted for merchants (Hanham 1985, 151; Kermode 1998, 208–11; Carus-Wilson 1937, no 49). All the goods on a ship might be sold by one factor, or each merchant could appoint a separate person to act for them. Merchants typically appointed agents who would regularly act for them overseas. For example, Gilbert Maghfled, a London merchant, in the 1390s

had agents in Flanders and Bayonne in south-west France (James 1956, 365).

Goods were rarely sold directly from the ship, because they had to be inspected to prevent poor quality items being passed off as those of greater worth. Premises were available which might be hired for short periods, both for storing and displaying goods, and to provide accommodation for any foreign merchants while they were ashore. In London, for example, cellars were available for Gascon merchants who arrived with cargoes of wine, but they were also provided with rooms for sleeping and eating (James 1971, 76–7). The Hanseatic Steelyard in London provided both houses and cellars for goods awaiting sale or shipment and there were similar arrangements in the Hanse's Steelyard in King's Lynn (Jansen 2008, 68–70; Keene 1989, 20). Houses for local merchants in London, Sandwich and presumably elsewhere commonly combined domestic accommodation and space for warehousing goods (Hanham 1985, 318; James 1956, 364–65; Clarke *et al* 2010, 105, 192–94).

There was a natural tendency in foreign ports for visiting merchants to congregate together with their fellow countrymen, and this was often encouraged both by merchant guilds and the town authorities, for it allowed them to be supervised more closely (Hanham 1985, 217–19). The Company of the Staple in Calais had a list of hosts with whom English merchants might stay, while foreign merchants in that English enclave were similarly regulated and their hosts had to report on the 'strangers' they were lodging each night (Hanham 1985, 221; Power 1963, 143). Similar constraints were found in English ports for foreign merchants, though their observance was very patchy (Ruddock 1946, 31, 34).

The lodgings for merchants away from home usually provided common dining facilities. This enabled the male merchants, who did not expect to cook for themselves, to have a daily hot meal and bound them together as a community. The character of such communal dining is vividly conveyed in a letter of 1476 from Calais by Thomas Betson, who was writing to his fiancée and concluded by explaining that he was being called down from his chamber to lunch by the fellowship of the lodging, 'Come down! Come down!', 'To dinner!', 'At once!' (Kingsford 1919 ii, no 166; punctuation and spelling following Hanham 1985, 35). Similar arrangements were found in the Hanseatic trading settlement at Bergen in Norway where each tenement (*gård*) or row of buildings had a single common room and kitchen which served all the merchants (Helle 1994, 22; Wiberg 1994, 53–7).

Other late medieval communities similarly had their food prepared and expected to dine together. These included masons and workers on building projects. They laboured long hours, lived away from home and were provided with a cook because they lacked the support normally provided by their family. Food was prepared and consumed in a common room (Knoop & Jones 1967, 53, 104). A further group, and one about which we know very little were itinerant fishermen working from shore bases. They took up residence at such places while following shoals of fish which swam along the coast. One example of this, though the record is relatively late, are the fishermen working off Dungeness in Kent where there was a communal dining hall (Gardiner 1996, 19). The common feature of these groups was that they were predominantly or wholly male workers who, for reasons of their employment, had to live away from their families. We can assume that the kitchen and hall at Horn Castle served a similar group of people.

#### THE OPERATION OF COMMERCE

The system of trade in the Irish Sea, English Channel and North Sea operated on a dendritic network. If the goods were assembled by water, they would pass through a series of small ports which fed the merchandise to larger ports or 'bulking centres' where the cargoes for overseas shipping were made up. Alternatively, the goods might be brought overland to such major ports having been gathered from producers or minor merchants. At the larger ports the goods were laded on larger vessels for longer voyages. At their destination the reverse took place. The goods were broken down into smaller loads and distributed locally (Childs 2006, 266; Gardiner 2007; James 1956, 367; Kowaleski 1995, 232). The system worked well in the highly commercialized areas of Europe where goods could be bulked by the exporting merchants in preparation for lading on ships when they came into port. This was particularly true for commodities which were shipped on a regular, often seasonal basis. The thrice-yearly wool shipments to Calais and the biannual wine shipments from Bordeaux are examples (Hanham 1985, 129; James 1971, 125). Such fleets might travel in convoy, sometimes with armed ships to protect them from pirates and privateers which were, at various times, a particular hazard for medieval merchants (Hanham 1985, 131; Webb 1962, 79–80).

That system we may term merchant-to-merchant commerce. Such commerce allowed relatively quick sales and prompt re-lading because the goods were purchased and sold in bulk. It may be contrasted with an alternative mode of commerce

found in the unurbanized areas of the North Atlantic. Producer-to-merchant commerce has attracted much less attention because it took place in areas where trade and also record-keeping was less well developed. In such situations the imported goods were not sold in bulk, and often not for coin, but were exchanged in small quantities with producers. The chief effect of this was to turn the visiting merchants, who in this system travelled with their cargoes, into shopkeepers trading small quantities of goods, and inevitably prolonged their stay abroad until they could complete the sales. These systems of trading were found, for example, in Iceland and Shetland where German merchants spent the summer amassing a ship-load of dried fish, a product which they obtained in exchange for the manufactured goods they had brought from their home ports. These merchants had a strong interest in tying producers to themselves to ensure the supplies of dried fish in subsequent years. They did this by offering goods on credit, creating a debt which had to be paid off through future supplies of fish (Friedland 1983, 92; Helle 1994, 22–3; Hofmeister 2001, 35).

The infrastructure in the North Atlantic islands for bulking goods did not exist, nor were there local merchants with the capital to gather together large quantities. Instead, an incoming ship had to serve as a floating warehouse, gradually accumulating the goods from numerous local producers to take in return, while at the same time discharging the commodities brought for exchange. Ships set out on an annual voyage to the North Atlantic, arriving in the spring and staying until late summer, when, having acquired a full cargo of goods, they would return to their home port. The actual place of exchange was usually a booth or hut erected close to the shore where a quantity of merchandise might be stored. The hut was occupied by a merchant who would negotiate the sales and keep account of debts and their discharge. The more substantial ports had a number of booths occupied by separate merchants (Donaldson 1958, 59–68; Friedland 1983, 92; Gardiner & Mehler 2007, 399–405; Smith 1984, 10–20).

#### COMMERCE IN ARDGLASS

We can now set the buildings of Ardglass into these patterns of commerce. The Newark has been recognized since at least the mid-18th century as a series of shops (Harris 1744, 22; Stokes 1891, 11; Vallancey 1786, 680). The problem has been to understand by whom they might have been occupied and how they operated within the commercial systems which have been sketched out above. McNeill (2005, 13) noted that they were not exactly

like any Irish medieval shops. His solution was to look beyond Ireland for comparable examples. He drew attention to the terraces built in England in the 15th century and known as 'rows' or 'renters'. These were constructed to provide accommodation, working space for craftsmen and commercial premises for the sale of goods. As recent studies have shown, there was no sharp distinction between working and living areas within urban properties. Space was used flexibly, though the ground floor generally served for commerce, and the first floor was reserved for domestic activities (Clark 2000). If we accept that the buildings were probably for commerce and for accommodation which is implied by the provision of latrines, we run up against the question of who was occupying them and to whom they were selling goods. McNeill was clear on this:

These were presumably intended to be let to craftsmen who would sell clothes, tools or equipment, food, etc., to those who brought the goods of the region to the town for export and to the visiting boats' crews and fishermen attracted by the fishing offshore (McNeill 2005, 18).

They were, in short, for the townsfolk of Ardglass who wished to occupy a site close to the waterfront which was the centre of commercial activity. However, there is one problem with this and one feature which needs to be explained. The problem is the lack of any heating and cooking facilities in the majority of the buildings. An 18th-century antiquary perspicaciously concluded that they were occupied

in the summer, and summer only, as their lodging-rooms were over each shop, and could not be habitable in winter, being so exposed to the sea and having no fire-places (Vallancey 1786, 680).

This is surely correct. If we are to accept the unusual and, perhaps, traditional explanation of the function of Horn Castle as a kitchen and communal dining room, we have at least solved the problem of the absence of a fire for cooking. However, the presence of a separate cooking and dining room is a very unusual feature and hardly typical of an English 'renter'.

There were a number of configurations of trading and accommodation buildings in north-west Europe in the 15th century, and none of these fits the evidence from the Newark precisely. Instead, we have to infer the function of the building from the evidence of the structure itself. McNeill rightly compared the Newark to the English 'renters', for it resembles them in the clearly commercial character

of the building which had large windows to display goods. The windows would have been closed by a shutter, or a hinged table which might be folded up to close the window at night (Clark 2000, 64–6; Quiney 2003, 264). We may conclude from this that the merchants who occupied the building were actively selling goods, not merely dealing in bulk commodities which were usually examined inside a warehouse by purchasers (Hanham 1985, 159–60; James 1971, 76). Indeed, the area of the ground floor of the units — 2.9m by 1.8m — was entirely inadequate for a warehouse, and indeed even part of that space must have been used for the stairs or a ladder to the upper room. The total floor area of 11m<sup>2</sup> of each renter is also small overall, even by comparison with 'renters' in England, which rarely were less than 20m<sup>2</sup> (Meeson & Alcock 2016, 14). So, while the Newark resembled a row of shops in some regards, in other respects it was definitely unusual: the units were exceptionally small, there was provision for a communal kitchen and dining room and the location was right by the waterfront — an unusual place for commerce. Furthermore, we might add that the provision of latrines was exceptional for lesser artisans, and the accommodation is deficient on facilities for heating, though it is possible that braziers could have been used.

Seasonal occupation by merchants seems a better explanation. They did not need a fire in the summer, the main trading season, particularly if food was provided in a common dining hall. The implications of the communal kitchen and place for dining is that it served a predominantly male community, which would again support the impression of a group of merchants, but not a permanent body of shopkeepers who would have lived with their families. We come up again to the problem of the relatively small size of the individual units and the relatively large number of them. We are led to conclude that these served a number of incoming merchants not dealing with large volumes of goods. This matches more closely the North Atlantic producer-to-merchant pattern of commerce, rather than the merchant-to-merchant commerce, which seems to have been the predominant pattern in the major ports of Ireland. In short, we are led to the view that the Newark resembles, at least in certain respects, the trading booths of Shetland and Iceland.

Natascha Mehler's review of the evidence for trading booths drawn from across the North Atlantic indicates how diverse such buildings were (Mehler 2012). They not only reflected the local building traditions and materials, but were adapted to serve the particular manner in which trade was practised. Since Mehler's paper was written, other



buildings have been investigated which support this point. The stone building excavated in 2011 at the Norwegian late medieval port of Avaldsnes on Karmøy was dated by radiocarbon to the early 15th century (Elvestad & Opedal forthcoming). It measured 8.6 by 4.7m internally and comprised two floors, a stone undercroft and a *laft* or cross-timbered ground-level floor. The building most closely resembled other late medieval Norwegian houses, though the use of stone for the lower wall is somewhat unusual (Skre 1996, 67). Similarly, a trench cut in 2016 by Fornleifastofnun Íslands at Landey at Kumbaravogur on Snæfellsnes (Iceland) showed that the booth there was built in turf with stone lining. Historical evidence (Kohl 1905) links the booth on Landey with mid-16th-century German merchants from Oldenberg and the discovery of redware pottery made in nearby Bremen supports this conclusion (Mehler in preparation). Icelandic buildings were typically made with turf walls usually lined with wood (Urbańczyk 1999). All these structures and others considered by Mehler were similar to, but not the same as contemporary domestic buildings.

It would be wrong to conclude that this area of the Irish Sea operated entirely through producer-to-merchant commerce. We have already established that there was a warehouse adjoining Jordan's Castle, so clearly some merchants in Ardglass were able to operate on a larger scale and deal in bulked goods. A further warehouse still survives at Taaffe's Castle a little further down the coast at Carlingford, Co Louth. That tower house has a broad original opening at the ground floor facing the quay to allow access to goods stored within. An attached later building to the north provided further space for the storage of merchandise (Cassidy 1983, 11–21).

The picture which has emerged from a recent study of commerce in Ulster was that it lay at the fringes of two systems of commerce. One belonged to the more commercialized world of merchant-to-merchant trade found predominantly further south in the Irish Sea and in England. The other belonged to the North Atlantic world served by merchants who brought manufactured goods to exchange for local produce, typically for preserved fish (Gardiner & McNeill 2016, 254–58). Fishing, both by local boats and incoming vessels, was certainly important by the early 16th century in Ardglass, and perhaps a century earlier when the Newark was built (British Library, Harl MS 3756, f 94v). The distinctive feature of the Newark arises from the operation of producer-to-merchant commerce, in which the incoming traders had to occupy sites on the shore over a period of time to accumulate

sufficient goods to provide a cargo for the ship. This was also the practice on the estuaries of the Bann and the Erne in the early 16th century where ships moored for two months to gather sufficient cargoes (Gardiner & McNeill 2016, 238). We should not exclude the possibility that trade at Ardglass may have had another dimension. Instead of simple bartering imported goods for fish and other produce supplied by the locals, the most common method of exchange in the North Atlantic trading system, there may also have been sale of goods for cash. It is doubtful whether this was ever very significant as there was limited coinage in circulation in eastern Ulster in the 15th century (Dolley 1987, 822–66; Seaby 1955, 167). Nevertheless, commerce, of whatever form, was sufficiently great that it was judged worthwhile making a major investment to provide the accommodation for numerous visiting merchants.

The Newark cannot be readily placed among the urban or commercial buildings of England or south-east Ireland, nor can a close parallel be found amongst the merchant booths of the North Atlantic (Mehler 2012). It appears to be a hybrid, bearing some features of trading buildings and others of urban shops. The closest parallel to the Newark may be the buildings of the *Kontore*, or Hanseatic settlements, particularly those at the Steelyard in London and in Bergen. These provided a series of rooms for the all-male community of German merchants with accommodation set over the storage facilities for goods, and a communal dining room and kitchen (Keene 1999, 418–20; Wiberg 1994, 53–8; for a plan of the London Steelyard, see Jansen 2008, fig 6). What distinguishes the Newark from these is the shop-like character of the ground-floor rooms which has no parallel in the Hanseatic buildings, though they do have some resemblance to the English 'renters'.

This reconsideration of the medieval buildings of Ardglass has illuminated aspects of trade which are barely hinted at in historical studies of Irish trade (Childs & O'Neill 1987) and have been insufficiently investigated in archaeological writing (though see McAlister 2015, 137–48). In an earlier paper some of the complexities of exchange in the 15th century in the north of Ireland were outlined (Gardiner & McNeill 2016). The challenge to archaeologists now is to fill out the picture of producer-to-merchant trade which we might expect to have been the more common form of commerce in the north and west coasts of Ireland, but a type of exchange which is poorly recorded in historical sources.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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